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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JUNE 3, 2005

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**BELIZEAN GANG LEADER SENTENCED TO 400 MONTHS'
IMPRISONMENT FOR MULTI-TON COCAINE IMPORTATION OFFENSES**

DAVID N. KELLEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that late yesterday, GEORGE ENRIQUE HERBERT, a Belizean gang leader who worked with Mexican and Colombian drug cartels, was sentenced in Manhattan Federal court to 400 months' imprisonment (33 years and 4 months) on cocaine importation charges.

HERBERT was convicted by a Federal jury in December on all four counts of an indictment charging him with importing multiple tons of cocaine into the United States between March 2001 and August 2002. The jury also found that HERBERT employed firearms in connection with the cocaine-trafficking offenses, and that he managed and supervised others in the offense.

According to the evidence at trial, Herbert was enlisted in March 2001 by a corrupt Belizean government official working with the notorious Mexican Juarez Cartel, to assist in the smuggling of ton-quantities of cocaine from the Atlantic

coast of Colombia to Calderitas, Mexico. HERBERT, assisted by armed members of his Belize City street gang, the "George Street Crew," received the cocaine shipments, each approximately 1.5 tons, in the waters off Belize from speedboats dispatched by high-level Medellin cocaine supplier Mauricio Ruda-Alvarez. HERBERT and his associates then transported the shipments through the reefs and small islands off Belize, to the port of Calderitas, Mexico. In Calderitas, Juarez Cartel operatives, assisted by corrupt Mexican police, took custody of the cocaine and shipped it to the United States. The evidence at trial established that in this manner, HERBERT participated in the importation of over 12 tons of cocaine into the United States, as well two cocaine shipments, totaling over two tons, that were foiled by the United States Coast Guard in the spring of 2002. The evidence showed that after Mauricio Ruda-Alvarez commissioned a failed kidnaping attempt on HERBERT in August 2002, HERBERT vowed revenge in an interview with Belizean police. Two months later, Ruda-Alvarez was found murdered in the trunk of a car in Medellin.

In addition to the conduct found by the jury, United States District Judge SIDNEY H. STEIN, who presided over HERBERT's trial and sentencing, found that HERBERT had perjured himself during his trial testimony by falsely asserting that he believed the cocaine shipments to be part of a DEA-sanctioned

undercover operation.

HERBERT was prosecuted by the Office's International Narcotics Trafficking ("INT") Unit, with the assistance of the New York Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force (the "Strike Force"), which is made up of agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE"), Internal Revenue Service, United States Marshals Service, New York State Police and New York City Police Department. The 400-month sentence is the latest in a string of lengthy sentences handed down to high-level foreign-based cocaine importers in cases prosecuted by the INT Unit. Last year, Juarez Cartel chieftan Jorge Manuel Torres Teyer was sentenced to 456 months' imprisonment, and Juarez Cartel operatives Victor Manuel Adan Carrasco and Oscar Moreno Aguirre were sentenced to terms of 264 months' and 204 months' imprisonment, respectively. Last Wednesday, in another case prosecuted by the INT Unit, Colombian cocaine kingpin Alberto Orlandez Gamboa was sentenced to a term of 480 months' imprisonment. Other leaders of the Juarez Cartel - including Alcides Ramon Magana, Jesus Albino Quintero-Meraz, Gilberto Salinas-Doria, and Mario Villanueva-Madrid, the former governor of the Mexican state of Quintana Roo - are in custody in Mexico awaiting extradition to the Southern District of New York

for their alleged participation in a conspiracy to import over 200 tons of cocaine into the United States.

The successful investigation and prosecution of HERBERT, and the dismantling of the Central American and Yucatan Peninsula operations of the Juarez Cartel, were accomplished with the assistance of offices of the DEA in Belize City, Merida, Mexico and Bogota, Colombia, the Belize Directorate of Public Prosecutions, the Belize Police Department, the Colombian Department of Administrative Security, and the Mexican Attorney General's Office Organized Crime Unit. Mr. KELLEY praised the outstanding investigative efforts of the Strike Force, the DEA, and law enforcement authorities in Belize, Colombia and Mexico.

Assistant United States Attorneys RICHARD SULLIVAN and ANIRUDH BANSAL are in charge of the prosecution.

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